



IF I GET THERE
- Poems of Faith and Doubt,
a collection

Allison Grayhurst



If I Get There
- *Poems of Faith and Doubt,*
a collection

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Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Bless The Fallen

**Bless the fallen, the less than ghost faces
that haunt this cityscape.**

**Bless the one who cannot give, who cannot
nurse a broken heart.**

**Bless the one hardened by degrees, by small failures
that mount a life incapable.**

**Bless the proud bearer of truth who cannot be humbled,
blinded by spiritual vanity.**

**Bless the arrogant, the one who feels movement
only by force.**

**Bless the bearer of bitterness, who has no stronghold
but hate.**

**Bless the one who fails to see the birds fly, hear
the angels in their dreams.**

**Forgive us our canyons where self-pity reigns
and self-pity devours.**

**Hold us near the harbour light though the chaos of sea
be the only realm
we, as of yet, have known.**

Receiving

Though I recognize kin
in a bird's faultless face,
the world is wheel, is cold,

master of my open heart.
And out on the streets, away
from embraces, the sun
disturbs in its strength and independence.

People grow old
before my eyes,
stirred by nothing
but further comfort.

Fire cloud above - it is
this hunger, this old faith, old
as God. This faith so clean
I may go mad, harder than love
to bear:

Endless cutting down.

For This Face Only You Could Alter

**Be for me my mask torn down.
Take from me my old and hatching temper.
Take my wanting, my struggle
to renounce approval.
Be for me the lonely desire, the one
celebrated by each breath.
Take the guilt from my
loins, the hours spent mute,
consumed by fear.
Be for me a living arrow, a communion
of conviction and gentleness.
Take from me my fate, a conditioned future,
an inevitable plan.
Love me though my love
is sensual, thin of voice, of spiritual
decision.**

Nothing Without You

Like a hawk whose
shadow falls first on the mouse
before its talons carry the prey away,
so first falls the static shade
where confusion and useless struggles reign,
before the soul is scooped into a killing sleep,
and all that was familiar falls, below the manic moon.

I tried to give away the things I was wedded
to keep, I tried to drown in the fire of your demand,
but the wage was too high though my glass eyes still glow
for the house of your deliverance.

And in my bed where the prayers arrive to grip
and alter my unconscious flow, I feel you near like
a lover and like death, patiently waiting my embrace.
Your drink is wonderful, though
my passions falter and my habitual fears are relentless.
Your love beats the bitterness from my breast,
rips my nightmares
of their shields so that I crumble like a wood-stack with
one middle-wood-piece pulled, until I have
no reverie for all these worldly things.

And with my self-might crushed and your mercy
by my side, all but that love is made the fool,
subdued then denied.

Safe In You

In you, mystery is masked
by no one's hood, has grown
away from the tyranny
of world and the gloom
of nations betrayed by
their gods.

In you the inexplicable
takes a womb, a rhyme
from your sweet blood
flowing.

And love, once pale and clay-like-cold,
selected you to partner my hope,
to resemble visions vacant of sentiment
and teach me to abandon
death and ill-nourished joys.

Your love wraps around like a melody
undulating out from your exceeding
intensity, it wraps,
until I surrender, unable, unwilling
to move.

The Jesus Fire

When I saw words
that no symbol shadowed,
old as life, stripped
of mask and sleep . . .

When my heart broke
from too much truth, broke
and was humbled, carried
and was humbled like a dragonfly
is by the wind . . .

When what was so familiar
became new, burning all space,
building the consciousness
of death, of choice, of the wanting communion . . .

When I was fed with this food
and my enemies ran naked in visions
of wounding beauty . . .

I was lifted
I was one among many, safe
as a sapling
sheltered by the brave devotion
of a lonely child.

Lessons at the End of the Rope

Be there to let the night wind in,
let it fill your bones with its darkness,
knead its spikes into each nerve,
until collapsed, unrecognizable, you
see yourself primal, stripped to the root
of ancestral fear, until you see
your house on fire, and all your children trapped.

Then begin with involuntary surrender
and let your eyelids hang limp and
the towel of your dignity too.
Let loneliness be your inheritance prize,
not the public judging eye.
Let the empty schoolyard be your bed.

Believe all the more within your doom
though God's love can appear pitiless
in the framework of time, it will arrive
fresh-faced, answering and apparent
when you trust the hood and ways
of the tide.

Baptized

Then when goodness was torched
with an indelible flame,
and toothless innocence
was molested by ambition, pale were the days
that followed, dashed against
the rocks of prophetic doom.

I was where I should not
have been, in jealousy's
neck-breaking grip. I was
in despair's limp embrace. And
the child I once was and the child that
fell among these faithless fears, grew up
clutched between the devil's burning fangs,
until I cracked and bore a new being
out of my tattered shell.

Now when my lips part for air
and are happy to receive
and love is daily fostered,
darkness lives like one more covenant gift
to milk for the heart's deep roar
and resurrection.

This

is yours,

**and all that comes
from your silence
into the wounded world,**

comes to rectify what is confused

**comes to give substance to each
shape and circumstance.**

**This that quickens our pulse,
makes us scream or praise, cuts
the artery of our ego then mends with
communion.**

**This is always good,
destroys (in endurable amounts)
the attachments that keep us from you.**

**This is our stumbling block
and our cane, arrives with the most mercy,
healing what can be healed
by setting the rest of us aflame.**

The Quenchable Drain Within

Like pale blood that rises
from cut skin, I see how poor
my devotion is.
I see my mind entranced
by frivolous difficulties
and mean shadows that drown
my lover's heart. I do not do. I dissolve
my conviction by distraction and thick
is my vanity that pulses louder than
my any prayer.

But like the undying air
I am comforted through
every break and self-betrayal.
Forgiveness drives out the ache
that keeps me immobilized,
where all is stultified by guilt.

With you I am whole,
despite my drifting thread-thin
desires and despite my own love
yearning.

When I Close My Eyes

The voice I hear soothes my unwatered ribs,
speaks generous and strong that the
stagnant heat that has made them brittle
will pass like a wave that passes
over a rock, accommodating yet
still whole. The heat will die like heat
eventually does, rising up into
all-absorbing arms.

I will be removed from this vultured pit,
and when removed the pit will be remembered
as a womb. Then I will be praising
its every depth and syllable.

The voice I hear soothes my flesh-stripped knees,
singing of a mercy, indestructible.

Walk Low

Walk low in case I forget
the roots of my deliverance.

Walk low so my head knows it is human,
and my heart touches daily the earth I will
return to.

Walk low in days of joy, in hours of toil.

Walk low when leaping over burning fields,
into a relentless hunger.

Walk low on the land and café corners,
kindled by the sun's yellow grain.

Walk low, remembering how I turned from
another's need, held a dead starling
with eyes unable to weep, and thought
myself good for getting through.

Red wagon on its side. Red dream filling my
mouth like fire.

Walk low for whatever in me that is true,
was given by and belongs
to only you.

Purest Obedience

Like a fierce wind
driven by the fires of Jerusalem, he
overtakes me from my eyelashes to my
fingernails, mends the hole in my sock,
the scar on my lip.

Like a new truth spoken, like the
veils of God dropping, he calls me
to his table, cleans my confusion,
spins me on my axle and holds his hand to mine.

He is the one thing guiding,
the one that takes all else into itself,
saturating me with good fear
and with the safety that children know
beside a parent's accepted love.

Near Daybreak

A flood of gentle morning,
grey from last night's storm.

The form of all I long for
leaps into a cloud.

Branches fall, crows call
out to me, an old man
walks with a doorframe in his arms,
cursing the sunless sky.

I sit in my morning chair, the faint
hum of distant cars soothes my belly
of its lonely ache. Balconies are
deserted, and even squirrels continue in sleep.

Who loves when no one is around, in this
embryonic stillness, this cloak of ash and humidity?

God is in the churchbell waiting its first ring,
in the dreams of the dying, and in the chestnut tree unbloomed.

God is in the tails of chasing cats,
the underwear on the line, and in
the pressure of time, as this morning lulls
its carefree, sabbath song.

In a Stillness

**Just add upon our days
of private history
this day, that for each is different.**

**Let God get us through
what vanity and determination cannot
and let spirits rise or sink,
like constellations do, given their hour.**

**Serpent pain, hollow time lingers
like a bad stare from a wounded heart with
bad intentions. I break doors but travel
unseen, thin as a ghost through crowds of ghosts,
placeless in this torrent sea of World.
And World alone, I beg to and compromise for
the duties of my higher heart.
Things tear inside, but I know God is here
just the same as when there was no ache
and love was fiercely felt
from all encounters.**

Sheaves of Time

Sheaves of time like wispy hair
freed to the wind, fall on me,
tickling my skin with their subtle happening.
Happy are the people with soap opera love
and yellow hair.
Happy am I rolling and stretching & rolling
under the great white sun. I am moved
to deliver my package at noon. I am myself bonded
to my mission like ligaments to the bone.
Sheaves of time drift on my plate
like leaves from my favourite tree.
Call me out from my doubt and let me
love each day as new, with the kind of hope
only children hold, or lovers caressing faces,
feeling eternity on their fingertips.

Within This Hour

I needed you like someone hunted,
strumming my fear on the stems of weeds.
I crept like a lizard through
cornfields and rainforests
waiting for your evasive eyes
to wake and summon me near your mystery.
A hundred days and a hundred
painted houses appalled me
with their good appearance.
All the waste of yellow maggots
infesting the phone, on the lips
of the viral public, demanded from me
a beauty I could never give.
My tent is dark
like inside the throat.
The blue kisses of disgrace that soak
my cheek seem to fall upon me like a web.
I felt a dead thing circle my waist
when duty made me his. I felt such peace,
a poisonous seed, and I need you
though my sense of curiosity wanes
and I am neither fearless nor brave.

Falling

But one belief, one knowing
that absorbs every desire into
its invisible womb. Simple
like a good taste on the tongue.
Perfect as heaven in the eyes.
But one brave surrender, to open
every book and turn on all the lights.
One mind graced with trusting,
sure of the warmth surrounding and of
tenderness in every destroyed hope.
More real than the corners of a table
or the crisp red of a rose.
More real than the shingles on rooftops
or the touch of a spider's web.
But the one thing unalterable, stronger
than death, than change, than the broken heart.
But one thing to give up all else,
where disappointments, fantasies and greed
melt like candyfloss in the mouth,
and time is the gift given to learn
the infinite dimensions of love.

You Were There

I thought of you
when the stones were thrown
from prairie ground.
I called to you in mornings,
weak with doubt and faced
by terrible extremes.
I ran to you when in the quiet of my room,
the walls oozed unloving shadows
and my heart could find no connection.
I talked to you in restaurants, in words
I dare never reuse.
I found you in my breadbox
and in the eyes of my enemy.
I want you though my wanting is broken
by distraction and gnarled by blunt fear,
but wanting and wanting
your hand on my shoulder
and your voice for all time
(subtle or strong) pressed
within my breathing air.

The Gift

In love like the buffalo is with
its herd, like the fingers with the
hand, like the fish with its translucent tail.
One dish I swallowed of hope
and resurrection. One morning
I held his rock that crushed all other
rocks before. I crawled to the edge
he asked, and understood eternity.
One morning he rippled inside me
like a living storm, and I knew love like food.
My hunger was beaten by his picnic.
The pond that was his cup,
drenched my being in the tender flesh of God.
For one morning I found my good soil,
and I will live for always now,
cleaving close, like to a first kiss,
that graced filled day.

New Commitment

In the wilderness of my dreams,
never shining a colour I could own
as a bluejay, its feathers.
How many worlds must I enter
to peel away to the light?
How to gather sand and build a rock?
And at night,
even love's generosity
is not so glorious,
even happiness cancels out
a great intensity.
I think strength means
knowing how to suffer
properly.
Strip me of this darkness and
let me lean against a beating chest.
I am not to be scattered like a weakling seed
or tossed from shoulder to shoulder
like a child without a home.
In the solid middle I will dive,
driving away my rage and the stuff
of distraction that devours
the better workings of my heart.

Bright

The brightest spot I ever found
has mended the knitted shroud,
has clipped the cloven hoof
and gave heat to the sunless sky.

The brightest warmth inside his eyes
has carried me over the burning meadow,
has placed my head on soft ground and made
the balm to ease my wounds.

The brightest gift that tore the veil
from my eyes, is tender as a cloud,
is sharp as a pelican's beak,
is the nucleus substance and the tree's
great shadow.

The brightest love that works in us all
comforts me through each trial and chore,
is my laughter, my pear tree growing,
is the unlocking of the latch
to every knocked-upon door.

Recovered

The light that fell in the fish's
mouth was a light that came loose
from the predator's paw.
And a thousand moons have died
like the blue whale and the harp.
Since then I have been surrounded
by a dryness that killed my ferns and the
tender, drooping lily. In summer, the
ghost is the future and the bride is
the first one sleeping. I called in my skin
to the humming river. I wanted my darkness
to dance and faith to run through me like
the smell of peppermint leaves.
This was the thing asked for. This was the thing
received. Grace nestled between the joints
of two extremes, and lucky was my drink.
I believe in you - the fire is your smile,
and the soft infant underfoot is your heart and seed.
I have felt a flicker of your shape in a Spanish sunset
and in my father's last goodbye.
Sometimes I am a skeleton, other times, only flesh.
But today I remember the bounty
of all my journeys, and I love you. I am amazed.

A Moment of Clarity

I dreamt I met you by the river,
washing your hair under the Jordan sun.
I dreamt you looked like no extraordinary man,
as those around you shone.
When I said Yes to your common eyes, then
your beauty seized me like the touch
of God on my shoulder, then you made me yours.
It was either blindness or amplified sight,
with only faith first to stretch the distance.
It was a moment to be offended or to praise.
I dreamt you held my hand then sent me back
to a waking state. I dreamt in the dream
I offered my life to you. It was a decision. It was
liberating. But now on my couch writing these words,
the everyday distractions hit and I am not as pure
as in that dream when seeing you made it simple.

The Voice We Love

The voice we love is a symphony amidst
the turbulent waves. It is as faint as hope but
it is the ring we've always cherished.
We have flocked towards the cave
where three animals live
with the sounds of vengeance on their tongues.
We have built the gate to pass through.
We have carved a wondrous
beginning. The silverbell has melted. Talk is nothing
but defining and defining.
The voice we love fills us like a miracle, has laboured
on the Earth too long. Time is an idol that binds
most hands. We were awake when we slipped
from the light into secrecy. All the while, the sudden
death, the funeral and the urn in hand. Now we are
left untied, eternity brewing in us like a mortal wound.
The voice we love is agonizing. It is a veil, a kindness
that harvests a good nation. It is the nerve that nurtures
the grief-stricken and the confused.
The voice we love clothes our togetherness.
It has cured the flames that once reigned violent
through our stream.

Because of You

It was the music I always craved,
but dreams were not marked down,
and love was dark as drawn curtains.
But because of you I lived. Because of you
I drank the venom and cure at once.
Because your hand pressed against my
forehead, I learned the strength of my voice.
I learned to dive into the lava-pit of grief and rise
changed, resolved.
Because of your gifts in the summer months,
we made it through with only pennies in our jar
and vague promises in all closed drawers.
Because you loved us under the withered tree,
we found the nectar of our song.
Because you reached when we fell,
all the things we name as good
we now know abide in you. Faith
will warm the broken mother while cradling the weight
of her child.

The God I Follow

**The God I follow
is the breastbone of all beginnings,
the gallop in the maimed animal,
the grief that murders any half-measures,
and lifts all eyes to meet the sun.**

**The God I love is love
unexplained, strange as the depths
of the oceans and strong as gravity.
This love swims through chimneys and air vents,
cloaks the guilty and the saved, is reborn
in every merciful eye.**

**The God I follow is forgiveness,
blind to all but the true measures of the heart,
is the arrow that hits the hungry
and bends to the burn of divine surrender.**

**The God I love is personal as the body,
is a lifetime pasture of rich anguish
and gentle revelations.**

On Edge

Recoiling then seizing the slanted hero
who lacks virtue or self-reproach
but reaches her destination just the same.
In this room where the flies are bent on suffering,
and cruel words ambush you when you sleep,
the dead play tricks with your long-lived grief
and the good light is crossed out like a lifetime
wasted.

But faith fills the void when you find it,
and know it like an exotic frog's poisonous skin
or the sky after hours spent in the cellar.
And faith is never found
only once but must grow its wings again
and again.

In this room where defeat has clawed into my mind
with the same old tune,
I hold up my head and wait for heaven
to throw me a flame and let
the milk pour.

The Last One

I know my name
like I know the way
I was brought towards
to be saved and made
imperfectly whole.
I know there never will be answers,
there is only faith.
I know that type of light is heavier
than grief, heavier than a pound of eternity
thrust upon the shoulders,
heavier still because it is light
because it is pure and utter mystery
that will never be explained -
unfastening the soul, coating it
with a thick and binding love.

As Mad As Mine

Grief is cold as the world
without a wish, riding
the waking land.
I saw the hounds trace my footsteps.
I believed in an everafter,
and the shore was my mansion to fight for.
I drove from the river onward,
looking for a season to change me.
The miracle, the terror before the miracle,
is the salty flavour of my blood.
Sudden love stinging the throat. Sudden
happiness to renew the cage of day-to-day drudgery.
I cry like a seal who has lost her pup to the killer whale.
Tomorrow is not a void
but a temple of what is held sacred today.
Everytime I answer, I lose.
But when I am holding my breath,
caressing the slit throat of all my hopes,
then and there my eyes and ears
have learned the voice of
golden heaven.

It is not new

**to hold out a hand
and find something dead
cupped inside.**

**It is not love that loves
through essential compromise.**

**It is God we speak to
everytime we verbalize,
and God will mend even the ones
who think they're saved.**

**It is the cracked jaw,
the splintered bone and expressions
of boredom and greed that
disease a child's innocence.**

**It is how we deal with the senselessness of being
that makes us either deny or realize
a gift of spiritual wonder.**

Bellythroes of God

The rawness behind the mastery,
the way to speak of the bellythroes
of God and kneel while doing so,
kneel not from the hindered place of
God and I,
but from knowing it is all God even
your self is God, and you are and God is love wider than air,
more abundant than eternity. Kneel
because this love is both personal and absolute,
it is reaching to you alone while
spreading thick the blaze of stars.
Kneel because for a fraction of a second you
know it is never God who stops giving, but it is
you who stop receiving, you who block
the constant flow, you who deflect it with your habits,
boredom and fear. That God is always there but that
you only feel God's presence when you decide to,
when you let the barriers crack and split a
sliver in your daily husk of coasting existence.

Sometimes too, when grief becomes the sword this
soft word never prepares you for - when with this word grief
you begin to hear not only the sorrow but also the scream
that hits like a hurricane pulling a child from
your breast. And there it is grief in all its monstrous
proportions. There it is, the very thin line
between God and chaos
with the soul's ultimate peace at stake. Faith is the bridge.
For the faithless in grief would either go mad or harden like
little pellets in a mid-February storm. The faithless would
not know how to cope and stay whole.

Kneel because you know God is the dream we all seek
whether we it know or not.
God is the goal of all our striving -
the financier nestling in the fat, protective arms
of worldly security, the intellectual
devouring ideas like solutions,
ideas as a path to lead to some mysterious
ever-complex cerebral calm,
the soccer player feeling her victory in her torn ligaments
and in the shafts of her sweaty hair -
We look but we do not name it as such.
We look but God still is not the priority,
not the weight of all our emotions and thoughts,
not the bulk of our dilemmas, and not
the subject of our intimate talk.
God is something to hide from, the one hope
we all innately look for in prayer books
or in politicians. But God is not something
to be looked for, God is simply something to see.
God is my cup of restive tea. God in my shopping cart.
God in the standard and not-so-standard things -
in a teenager or a brick wall,
in an animal's unexpected tenderness or a dull piece of box.
God is not something to discover
but something to finally, wholeheartedly acknowledge.
God is and we are when we embrace
the boundless directed compassion of God,
when we realize that God is the only one thing we need
that can grow to be stronger than gravity
and the cold desperation for survival.

At Last

At last I hear God's gale
rustling the magazine stands.
I feel the faith of a shellfish under
water and will reach this way into
a fabulous tomorrow with the stars as
my blueberries, and the darkness as
my branded peace.
At last the voyage needs no destination.
I see grasshoppers on every mid-summer leaf.
The barriers have been lifted and the thief has
managed nothing.
At last I have no dream to gain
or platform to paint. I am feeding, and food
is all I need.

This Love

**Linked to this love
that lives on the cliff's ridge
and below the waves of water and sand.
Linked like the spinal cord is
to the brain or the squirrel to the tree.
This love is hunger with heat,
it is words that stop the gallows blade,
it is the thing that brings two souls together
and walks them home.
This love is naked, shelter, empty air
that has a purpose.
This love pardons, shares my bath and bed.
This love I circle like a sacred fire, but still I cannot see.
This love is a lanced abscess, a camera hidden in a wall.
This love cannot betray and buries all abuse in tenderness.
This love cures the dying swan's cries,
has mercy on the insect and also on people
too broken or hardened to care about
this love.**

Call Me By Name

Speak to me in the
pestilence of my afternoon,
in the dungeon of my self-pity.
Speak to me though love has stopped
its singing and the arrows of wintry worries
sting my weary drum.
Speak to me to anchor me
in obedience.
Together, we could grow and clip
these leprous chains. We could put
out the emptiness that reddens our roof.
We could fill ourselves with perfect sky.
Speak to me and make me shudder
with faith. Let all that is hard to bear
burden me no more.
Speak to me and kiss my plague of troubles.
Bleed your infinity into me and I will be
your secret love.

In The Name

With the northern tide he came
like a bride to her first wedded kiss.
Born without enemies or pride,
he drank the flame of God. Soon
he was a legend and all the world
would praise his name like an unfriendly
habit. Some knew his word like
bread, like a babe that needed constant
tending. Some would hear and then in years, turn
back to join the assembly of conflicting voices,
pulling behind them the weighted shadows of so many
engulfing concerns.

I am one who heard and lost, who felt my blood
renewed and then ingested the virus of adulthood
and all its houses made of paper.

I lived with a rotted passion, with a sterile faith
and a heart so tight and annoyed.
This is a remembrance of the thirst
he cured.

I am saved again by the shrilling cut of his love
and by the tender stream of his great pity.

Pulled from the Lifeless Waters

**I see the eyes that blow the day
from the dark throat.
I feel the voice of unhindered love
wash over my skin like fresh butter.
I hear the world calling with its drug dull
blurbs and I fade like colour in the sun,
exposed at my roots to the drain of muted sorrow.
Then I wake to the good journey
and the ruthless tearing away of burdening stuff
to touch a purity that pains like
a small girl's smile or the death of someone near.
It is new again, has left me to stand on my own again
and take the challenge to my pores,
with forgiveness everlasting and the terror
of knowing so great, so generous a love.**

I Know That

I know that faith
ebbs and flows, sometimes
larger, then hardly there
at all.

I know my faith
is often all I own,
though barely visible,
crushed under
the world's forearm.

I know to sing and that singing
can be freedom no matter
the crack and heel.

I know to love
for love is what remains
when nothing else renews.

I know to pray like breathing.

I know there is forgiveness
for what I fail to do,
and mercy is there for me to receive
like water.

Until The Ladder Shows

You answer me,
not with an antidote
but by putting a pillow under
the dragging day.
You answer me,
not speaking of summer
but of sustaining.
Any onlooker could see
my shrinking scenery
but never know
the way you showed me a pebble-stone path
over the high hills and muddy terrain.
You answer me with minimal deliverance,
delicately stepping through this grief-inducing wilderness,
tree-like, moon-like, zen-like
you slide under my veil to add a little colour.
You answer with candle light, not gold,
but answering. And I accept with grateful sighs
this balcony to stand on
while fire consumes each corner of my fallen rooms.

Always There

The door's ajar
and my body can go there,
through the small space of light.
To make a landing for me
in the tumultuous rantings
of existence - held out
a moment, reminding me of how
to be alive with you there,
feeding my weakened gut, breathing
my breath, speaking of a love greater than
any love, and in doing so, forgiving me my
distractions and daily rituals of despair,
forgiving me for forgetting the magnitude
of your cloak that warms both in and out.
The gift again at my doorstep. The times
I do not look for you, then you find me.

I am not afraid. I am just a citizen - yours, even when
undirected, cynical and spent.

One Grain

Bring me home
like the armadillo to its feast,
like the painter to her beholder
and the captain to his sea.
Love me long in this fearful underground
where the world I see is inside out
and the laws of the land have no place
for individualism or mercy.
Touch me on the shoulder,
let me know it is your answer,
and the sun will not be denied
nor will the seed die from bad weather.
Open my sight beyond this kaleidoscope
of contradiction, into the frame work of
one-light, one-way, one beautiful beginning.
Bless me, feed me, know me.
I will be what I can be,
higher than my mind can carry,
higher still with you by my side.

Slice the pony

in the pocket -
a child's gift that ran the gamut.
And now we are onto more elaborate toys,
finding meaning in the pebbles left on the road
and finding hope inside a risk. Because of so many things
lost and remade, I have been left without a plan
but to lean without shame or resistance on
the bosom of God. That is the role, the flesh
and backbone combined. There is only this place
and this time and then - death, like a miracle
in the fishtank of existence. Death like sunshine
in the lonely eye. Death like the taste of a red pepper.
Because I know it is all for you and all is given
by you - we sing, we paint our stories - this story
rich with surprises and laden with disappointments.
I sing and paint and wish for other things,
though I am satisfied with love and with the way
you see fit to carry me across.

Jesus in the Counter-Stream

**The grip was lost,
chocolate was made
and the makers were magic.
For this I bled
then opened my heart
to a difficult wonder.
It has been worth
a pile-up on the road,
no rubber under the foot
and a year of hard breathing.
With this I have come to understand myself
and place my hope outside the framework of
normal time.
In the closet
in the here-and-after
mercy is the lipstick,
the colour of the camera.
What is lost is lost and all that was lost was remade
when he was found.**

Turned

I turn my head
stiff with anxiety's brutality and shame.
I fill my lungs with the cold fumes
of survival and find myself
lost from the legacy of miracles on my garments,
lost from the jewels under every stone in my yard.
I turn my head
and I see again the gifts that pull me through,
every time, each time at the last minute.
So why do I suffer in doubt, blistering
with fears that never hold water? The world
teaches me it is calculating and void of mercy.
God teaches me of only mercy, of treasures
astounding and undeserved but given with the love
of a thousand parents to their only child, teaches
me not to listen to the babbling crowd so full
of good advice and my future's concerns.
God speaks of grace, with grace manifesting at each
brick corner I face. At every impossible deliverance,
I am delivered.
I release my held-back breath.
I accept your goodness like a song that has finally
developed to fruition, sunning the darkness once so coveted
in my head -
turned.

Friend

Under the frame
needing - a child surging
with need for that maternal hold. I am held
by Jesus - terrible in my river, wondrous
like a colourful bird to my scared vision.
I have found a deeper attachment, a lifeline
that can have no other country - a living gift
to rescue my drowned wishes and comfort
the salted wound. I am pinned down to this divine
nourishment, my blood like the whale's blood,
like the sea lion's shifting in perfect temperature
according to the touch of sea.
I found words that caught the miracle in my hand,
that broke the rock around the gold - sheltering me,
demanding of me a devotion,
that with thoughts alone
I could never hold.

The Hand That Came

**The hand that came from
the cool water, reached
upon my deck to soothe
my extremes. The sun that
flowered green crumbled
across the twilight tide and painted
me a joy before unseen.
I watched the breaking waters
and felt it drifting over my skin like a spring-fresh leaf -
soft, majestic and full of promise.
The new seal was made, the old one broken.
It is the third birth.
A skull had fallen into my pocket and my secret
sold to dull fantasy. The waiting was cruel.
But the hand that came stripped me of my scars
and gave me an altar to place
my dying future upon.**

The Flood

Glorious weather, wetting
the decks and smallest of worms.
We were made to split the light
with voices singular and clean.
We were destined to wade in
night, free of logic, partakers
of heart-wrenching dreams.
I name myself lost but loved
and that is better than any key.
I count the madness in cracks
and know the world is ready to turn.
Funerals and baby births and
a barn alive with birds, soon
clouds will come and the zodiac will
burn.

God will be full of joy
and each household will be looking
in a new direction - close-to-the-bone,
materially threadbare.

One Light

that sails the final way,
dreams the book open, gives
and gets its power from the place
of no middle ground.

One light that knows that the grey space
sandwiched between life and death
 between faith and Godlessness
is not, can not, has never been
there.

One light that is light
like water is water
and nothing more.

One light that redefines the passageway
of the body's nerves,
that is the way of keeping whole,
the only necessary blessing.

One light infiltrating the nail grooves,
that answers only that which is not
intuitive-denying action, dismantles
the rules of the world while offering
so much more.

The bough breaks

and dreams collapse uncushioned
like the smile that forsakes me
and the wonderful illusion of things past
but never lost.

For here I cut my antennae down
and kiss the pyramid on my grass,
blessed by the end result
but never by the happening:

I know the world
and it needs forgiveness.

For here the smell grew toxic
and the glass filled to overflowing,
but the grime inside never got better,
though polished every day.

For here I cradle my body to sleep,
the long way down is the only way down
and we are sold by the scars upon our throat,
by the longing discarded that never knew it
could end

and by the only relationship we are all
bound to have - our stronghold with or
not with

God.

Another Level

Buzz from the wind cloud,
over the cable lines
and the heads of barn owls.
Shadows are bleeding through the brick
until they seep indoors, pressing in on the furniture.
I know the pattern on the ceiling,
I have witnessed this road so many times
before - to be twisted and toyed with
until finally broken - freed
of the false trap,
the inauthentic hold that holds me
in its manic, brutal indifference
like a fly in a jar looking for air-holes.
Thank you for that jar - to remind
me of the difference between atmospheres -
between common kindness and the evil like pinpricks
that sticks absentmindedly in the cavity of the throat.
Thank you for showing me the carelessness of those fixed
on this world and the generosity of others
that numbs my day-to-day pain
until I am admonished, awakened and ready to soar.
From out of the cave we decide
and then are divided. I choose you.
Make me good and brave - enough
to outshine this phyllo-dough hell.

My Flower

**A strange cup of blending flavours,
expelling creatures from the side of the house.
A gift is given, a gift is received,
making good the sickness of the spirit
by giving equal strength to bear the need.
I hold these cards. I hold them without decision
or seeing another way to stand.
I lift my umbrella and love the rain.
It is my stance that will-power or therapy cannot change.
In waves, the darkness spins around. But I am
owned by you. At your core I find my womb and
my stretching ground. Help me to see,
these disappointments that plague
will never leave, but your love will heal and the healer
will not condemn.**

We Ask For Light

We ask for light

for the given truth tied to your name.

We ask to break this putrid smog

and allow a breeze to flow.

We ask for forgiveness from the things

we see and do and what we cannot see

but know are in us.

We ask for help when all the help we have been given

is not enough.

We ask for hope, to gain a tangible velocity away

from this stifling mire.

We ask for your tenderness, to peel the hardened layers,

unblock our view, our way through, to blow

this atrophied cocoon.

We ask, though we cannot offer more

than our asking, not more than our supplication.

We ask with all we held onto, dropped -

stranded, unclothed and absolutely knowing we are

welded to your mercy.

Faith

It is found,
found in a pocket on a jacket
that has not been worn for years.
It is an emblem of uncharted kindness
that cannot fade even when I falter.
It is a name on a wall
that changes but is always mine.
It is the end result, the start of all
things good.
It is not going to leave me, or seep
through the mattress, underground.
It is so beautiful, it has the whole of my being.
It is speaking to me from billboard signs,
from the ones I loved and lost.
It is the parcel I have been waiting for.
It is my graduation party,
my only hope for recovery.
It is warmth and well being.
It is Friday night.
It is a star-shaped candy,
and it is found.

The Luminous Light

**The settling light
that bends a path through my woods
is placed again into the chamber and
has constructed something miraculous.
It has brought what was needed to the forefront
when the shattered, the held-together-by-a-pinprick world
mastered the decree of reality,
and all around and before was grey
and sheered off wings,
when it was hard to remember childhood trust
that trusts that every engraving on the bark
of every tree is deliberately carved with love,
that the sacred purpose of that love is absolute love, is
the purpose - and yes - there is no other plan but
to return to the moment of sweet creation.**

Where Love Draws The Line

Dark swamp surrounding
extremities, the core.
Mass of gangrene hue,
dripping through each hairstrand
and eyelash.
I felt Death talking to me.
It said to relax
into its nullifying void, to break
apart and relinquish my authority.
Then God held out a hand and said
to hold that hand and heal my
hopelessness with faith.
God said to choose this hardship
or choose Death.
God said I will not give you a solution,
only this choice.
God said - I draw this in your reality.
I offer you no escape, I offer
only the rest of spiritual acceptance.
God said
and Death lost its final say.

In The Thighs

**Blood in the thighs like
a bowling ball moving,
rotating, heavy, at high speed
up between the
hip bones, into the heart chamber.
Nothing can stop its weight and damage,
nothing can stop its motion.
The trees say "A different face of God is etched upon
my each and every leaf." But the beetle and ladybug
who eat the leaves do not care. And the person snipping
at branches does not care.
Through the thighs, moving
rotating, heavy, at high speed.
Call out to me
Call the number engraved into the armchair
He came like light washing over the many,
entering and cleansing only the few.
He came. He is
what everyone needs,
but the pavement is thick
and the ground beneath is rich,
saturated with worms,
moving,
thick
with worm motion
moving at worm speed.**

Blind Spot

**Like a crack in the wall
that cannot be fixed or
a terrible loss that waxes and wanes
by varying degrees but never fully leaves.
It is the spot that will not heal,
found on the floor by the fallen curtain.**

**It reveals that faith does not
mean protection from the chaos of chance,
only that God will stand beside you
once that chance has marked you
blood splattered and cold.**

Easter Faith

It is not emptiness,
but redemption. A redemption
after the emptiness
that comes with the hope of a blessing,
after there is no further down,
there is only up or death.
It is not suffering that bears such wisdom,
but the surrender and acceptance of God's love
no matter what - it is the purity of that acceptance,
the absoluteness of it
that matters, that causes the miracle -

playing out like a walk across the sun
without going blind or getting burned.

Choice.

I will sink your boat and struggle
with your scaly arms.
I will not let your hot sea swallow me
or let the light I earned from the birds
be extinguished in the deadness of your embrace.
One time, I was gentle with myself.
I took the remedy and widened my path.
Then you, with your ashen red-soul minions, ripped
the blood from my throat and I have been lying
here ever since, a victim - not the woman
I was made. I am not fragile, but I am of the sun
and of the darkness and I know the pure joy
of home. I cast you from my heart,
you who stole my fire, left me
weak-kneed and dependent upon an outer outcome.

Guide me down the shaft of this axle,
let my strength rise, dependent on only you.
I am not a single voice, ghostly in the darkness. I am
your servant - let me serve you - release me
from this fatalism, this consuming toxic tar.
Stand by my window, I will fight to save myself -
it will be just you and me at the bottom
of this grave and the demons I allowed in
and allowed to conquer.
At the bottom of this grave, I will cling to you.
Raise me up. I promise, my part will be played -
I won't let go.

Nothing

Nothing is wasted - not
time deposited into an illusion that
never was, not love laid out
like a sliced fruit, taken, then
spat back out - so utterly tasted and
so utterly refused.

Nothing is wasted, not women
counting the babies that once graced their arms,
now grown and gone, so rarely showing
tenderness or need -
not men who were babes, who were once able
to weep and were able to treat all with
unquestioned equality.

Nothing is wasted, not years spent in ambiguity
walking hospital halls, years of blood tests
and ultrasounds, offering no cure or
nameable disease.

Nothing is wasted - not poverty, not wealth,
not death, not grief.

Nothing is wasted if held out to God
held out, naked on a bed, under
the cracked ceiling.

Tomorrow

I open myself to the obsidian stone.

It is too much to lose myself in its
shiny warm darkness, so I press it
to my heart, I press my private light
into its own greenish dark sheen.

Love is coming. Like a tree in the winter wind
of twilight, it speaks to me. It charms my wound,
sings to me of abundance. Love is
on my doorstep, like a fully-fed child, giggling
at the playing squirrels.

Thank you morning for finally arriving.

It has been so cold. And these frostbite talismans
will be mine forever. But grace is no longer
a ghost, but something pure and solid, something I can
swallow. Grace has made its way inside and
the bells of welcoming relief
are ringing, ringing.

On My Belly

Speak to me as you would to
one of your prophets. Speak to me
before I dry out, before I corrupt the very
light I swore to keep. Help me
out of this fire that turns
like a heap of twisted cut wire
inside. Help me inside
not to be so broken, better
than my circumstantial mess.
Speak to me for a long time
until I know for sure
that you care.

I Was Soothed

**Blindness and brutality spilled
and I would not have gone on
but for the miracles of God's grace
that tightened around me
like a bandage, that held me up
like a puppeteer.**

**I made it through the impossible,
surpassed what I could do because
God held me in a fold like a fold
in the soft skin of sea.**

I Try To Breathe

**God said
I didn't do it out of malice,
I did it out of mercy.
And so I try to understand
through the emotion of purified faith.
I try to recognize the truth petrified within
like a soul cracked and brittle
but still shining its unique glow.
The cold egg sits in my pocket.
I keep it there for when I get hungry,
if I get hungry,
which doesn't seem to happen much
anymore.
So it sits, cold, rubbery and whole,
sits, an egg too squished to roll,
sits for potential nourishment, as security without salt.
I try not to use it. I try to hold onto what God said
and breathe that in
as my only necessary
sustenance.**

Drove Me Down

**By your mercy
the stone was thrown
that drove me down.**

**By your love
I catapulted
into the ditch,
and am still there.**

**By your freedom,
my faith was bound
and the rivers
outside**

have soured.

**By these things
my table was set and my ankles chained.**

**I see no way to be removed
but by your mercy
after the stone was thrown.**

Listening

Rising with the confidence
of 'no choice', rising in my tiny nakedness,
cupping equal parts poison and remedy
in broken clam shells.

It was a rock that was tossed that scraped my back.
It was words on paper that went dim because I was lost,
listening for a gurgle, a rhythm
to cherish, to roll in, lull in my mouth - sweet and hard.

God, do you love me? or is it only a dream?
God, love me, peel away this fishnet,
gather me into a single form.

Letting it out

The vision is a smoke cloud
released from my pocket, wrapping
me with its smoky warmth, breaking chaos
at its backbone.

A thousand chains of fear and grief
swoop down from the once singing sky
to crash on my limbs and drown me
with their weight.

God as full as the sea, flushing through me,
flowing around me with the starfish and the stingrays,
with the minnow fish and the barnacles,
God outside me, inside of me, holding me
in this vision, breaking the vine.

Let the wound not win

You sent me a crib of comfort,
a bridge to walk away from my moth-eaten coat,
a way to suddenly find that piece of string
I was looking for - I received, then
I lost the message, and my lungs flooded
with suspicious contempt.
My comfort was maimed and in this pit
of loudness and conflict, I saw my enemy everywhere:
Rain dripping from my sleeves -
only fear and judgment remaining.
In the morning, you returned to me. In the burn
of one small flame, in the sound of a perfect circle,
I asked your forgiveness:
To paint me with this freshness, shave
this mane of morbid madness and help me
cherish the ocean all day until night,
until I wake as one, hopeful again,
your child.

Jesus in my basement

**You are serious as the elements,
master of miracles that overcomes those elements.
You are golden and landing always
in the depth of true light.**

**I think at times I can hear your voice, immediate,
ambushing my breath and my lazy self-pity.**

**You call on me to change my skin, walk
this world with belief and wonder. You guide me
in your discipline, offer me promise, eternity,
hills and hills of lush mercy.**

**You want my words to be exhumed - to speak exact,
not be encased in avoidance, not caked in layers
of mind-twisting complexity.**

**Just to be here, in front of you - simple, unimportant,
broken by the world, remade by you.**

deeper layer of love

A bird dying in the tall grass, its wing, a bent leaf
that could not re-form. In the swamp yard, another bird
balanced on the stem of a tall weed, never noticing
the voice of death. The signature of each tree against
an unobtrusive sky. The frog placed by a well-intended child
in the middle of a road. The itch under the casted arm.
What mends the snow? In this land wedged
between instinct and heaven
does anything mend or know a lasting happiness
other than stillness?
Elements carved like karma into a snail's brain,
into the whale on fire with symphony,
into a baby, stillborn, and into its mother, whose substance
is now reduced to a wafer,
fossilized by impersonal failure.
There is so little love, so little to count on but the love
that continues loving despite the not-so-hidden deformities,
despite the limitations that bind us in these ambulance beds.
Only such love that carries the gruesome ghost
of each finite tale
can open the way to a new perfection,
to Gods' infinity of love that sees and heals
by its seeing, by its decided effort of
continuance.

The Long Pitstop

When I woke up,
I was a daughter of God,
for a while as pure as
a river, moving towards
a place of cascading surrender.
It took years for the cockroaches
to enter my house, to gnaw away at my toes
while I was sleeping - poverty and broken hopes and
death spiraling around me like a dust storm
I could not see through.
Even then, my faith remained queen,
and the love I found from others and God - even in death -
opened new passages of perseverance and renewal.
I had a child. Then two, and the singing never stopped.
Death came again and age stuck to my skin like wet sand.
Poverty dosed and soaked my bed
with its despairing drug, and hope
for a way out, fossilized, completely lost its pulse.
My future became a stuffed bird
I kept in a drawer to look at and admire its inert beauty.
Many weeks now I wonder
if I will be claimed, pulled from this sea of floating fish,
from this asylum where nothing ever pushes through
to the bright land of clarity.
I am waiting for a bell of my own, a kiss
of divine liberation.

Heaven must be active (not inert)

Life is raw

as a just-made wound. It is raw

so it is open to acts of mercy

and the beginning of true humility.

God is not proud but always available,

is always faultless in the body of love.

Life is raw

with no way to be protected from

cruel chance, no way but to ride the raft

down the falls and see what gets broken, then see

what gets preserved.

Renaissance

The fountain I drank from
became toxic, and the way to make more purity
turned out to be the way to make less.
And so I am small as a lump
of hardened salt. And so what
if my flesh is getting old - a defined woman
doesn't have to fear such a thing,
nor does she have to fear the collapse of her every hope,
because inside she is solid, though
still impressionable,
because she has learned that God's light
is born to flicker, and not to be
a heavy stream.

This Hope

**With the hope of recovery,
and with eyes everseeing
new ways to pronounce God,
my heart extends beyond
its necessary function
and leans closer to its
greater nature.**

**With this hope, love is possible,
love purified from fear,
so much wider than the typical emotion
and half-made substance of romantic dreaming.**

**With this hope, my hands remember old ways
of feeling. The stars chime with sounds
immeasurable, but finally recognized as true.**

**With this hope, dark is made right
and all extremities are drawn into the centre,
concentrated, solidified -
born and beginning.**

Eagle

Bound by evil,
the kind that has no shame or hidden gain
that has only stupidity as its strength and cruelty
as its force.

Bound to deal with the devil's lowest minion,
to feel its rotting invading tongue touch your
clothes, your books, your headband.

But not bound by its game as long as the game
is relinquished and God is sought when the axe comes down,
then it will pass through you like a phantom axe,
mighty in appearance, but achieving nothing.

Not bound if the worse comes, and still
you stand with peace and dignity, trusting God's reward
and promise of care.

Not bound if you are free in faith, if you know
yourself to be subject to a richer realm, higher than
these inching worms.

This spirit is speaking

**How much must I tell you,
with the dark sorcerers seeding my
potted plants and the old ways lost to
new ways yet unfound? How many times
must I twitch at the remembrance
of my cut throat in spring, contain my tears
in see-through plastic and continue to watch
the world go around, without a hiccup?
Acknowledge my fight, my flight into the wolf's den.
I am not a whale, pure as garnet,
nor am I full of your grandeur
and the calm, strong dive down.
I have the blood of a prophet, but not the backbone.
Side-swatted into a long consuming grief
and the world is just the same: Brides and school bells.
How long must I explain? I have lost the contours
of my face. There is a man
on my kitchen floor deliberately, almost artistically,
shaving my fleshless bones. One by one, like that,
I am unformed.**

Impossible, Only Possible Way

If you can make me better
than this bag of rage.
If you can calm my madness
and raise it ten octaves higher,
massage this grief from my belly, help
me look forward, dig me out of this sand pit, allow
me the strength to be better than who I am - then this death
will be but another movement, this betrayal and shock, only
a further stepping stone to rapture, resurrection.
Forgiveness would be mine, alchemizing my blood.
I could look with love on all this pain and know for certain
that my life is in your hands.

Speak

Speak to me of mercy
when the world is under my chin
and my body is stiff with fear and stagnation
Speak to me of love,
of forgiving my careless indulgences,
of holding my hand as I tightrope walk over this cliff
Speak to me of staying with me
of comforting my tears, of miracles I don't deserve
to ease this inferno of anxiety
Speak to me of knowing me and not condemning
my childish cravings
Speak to me in spite of my mortal foibles,
my sins of lesser greed and my hope
of a better tomorrow
Speak to me,
wash me clean in your light, take
everything

Covenant

Legends in the snowdrifts
of soulmate saga and the artists'
struggle to stay alive. Gospels in
the house of manna, sleeping,
somewhat blessed, always true.
I put my robin on the line, held it
to the cat's mouth and waited.
Through the window I saw a prayer
almost answered. Jesus, stay beside me,
hold my hand as we pass one house and
then another. I can feel your breath change the air.
I can trust you, smell your skin and be protected.
Everything depends on you and I
staying close, my back against the mirror - my face
only reflected through your eyes.
I will sing in your ear, be ready for the deep-sea dive.
I will love you first then radiate that love. I lean
on your shoulder, and I will stay this way
forever.

I have to push deep,

**pray deeply, as the ground
ripples and opens wide.**

**This last year's consciousness will be pulled from my mind
as a searing light radiates through, knowing me,
showing me the road released.**

**Glory will come and free me of this bile,
changed at last - like a larvae into a ladybug,
like a tadpole into a tiny toad - nothing can turn me back.**

I am listening. I have built myself a new main floor.

**I am ready to plunge naked into this pool,
to know myself at the moment of creation.**

**My throat will be dry of speaking,
but I will not stop speaking -**

It is all God.

A Way To Joy

Words and birthday wishes
fall asleep under the light.
In sleep, I see what I do when awake -
shooting stars that fade into dark infinity.
So far, I have a bed, two legs and a mission
I've felt before I could speak.
Kiss these hands God, bless this pain in my shoulders,
give me hope for recovery.
Every effort is stultified, has no nucleus,
no path towards the sun. Every movement forward
dissolves into the flavour of the wind, is weak
in its purpose, in its ability to love.
Print my name on your heart. I want to serve,
to walk again across the sand dunes, walk again
hand in hand.

Hell is High (when the only power left is to surrender)

At the height of this hill,
the warm air is gone,
the fledging is removed from its nest,
no fossil is found. Once
there was a living thing, up here,
something, at sometime, burned
with hunger.

The devil is a thief. The devil blows air bubbles
into the veins. The devil has many eyes,
though none offer clarity.

On this hill, I sleep, stride, then unveil this
saga of betrayal and disappointment. The devil comes,
but I will not be ruled. I accept this anguish, anger,
grief, and finally, emptiness - on this hill - I accept
God's love, though it hurts and breaks both my ankles
so that I am stuck here - on this barren pinnacle -
owner of what has passed and what has yet to come.

If I Get There

**If I was done with this canvas
and the pattern I formed upon it
could be tucked inside the space between
the filing cabinet and bookshelf . . .
If I could read the dialect of normal behavior
and place myself at the foot of its throne . . .
If the next step was the greatest step
that would extract me from this quagmire
and strip away the congealed substance around my bones . . .**

**then my head would be held in your hands,
cradled there like a new baby, helpless but secure -
my whole body supported by your one arm.
Love would be like food, and you would be
my devoted glory.**

No Ground

There are no leftovers,
no cylinder funnel to collect
and preserve extravagant prayers.
In this place, I lean but I dare not cry -
a rosebush past its prime, brittle in the sun.
I am collapsing, out loud,
reforming every cell, painful alterations. My God
of fluid, my God, grand as, and grander than, myth -
I have cut through this horizon. I have cut
through my thick interior, and still, I'm tilting
like an old tree
unable to stand. My God,
breathe into me, make plans for my soul or let me die,
bound in this circle. My God, rain into my reservoir -
it feels so long
since I have been untethered.
There are other worlds. There is Jupiter.
My God, please repair this punctured deck
or throw me overboard.
Fill me, my God, with love,
strong enough to override the weight of this
hard endurance.

I let go

**of my will, fantasies
of perfection that make
life my enemy. I let go of things
already lost, of water flooding my ship and
of the dead dolphin floating by.
I let go again of my desire
for unauthorized miracles
and accept the gifts I have been given
as a light over the ocean, guiding me,
marking me a 'someone' to find.
I let go of old photos and unclear stations
on the radio. I let go and embrace what
is living, knowing this is just fine,
knowing I am always held close
in God's engaging arms, knowing
I must let go**

Bare Essentials

I waited on you,
now I am free to let the waiting go.
I give you back the burden of setting things right.
I give you back the long walks carrying
a weight I could not control, the tightness
circumventing my throat and my days never perfect
because of senseless lack - I give it back to you,
the fallen star, the third-degree burns,
the collection of my fears and disappointments.
I cannot hold it any longer. My own voice betrays
me - desperation has mutated me, but not
anymore. You can hold all these inadequacies
and the stark gravity
of survival - you can create love out of nothing,
bring destiny to our doorstep, take all this debt
and impossibility and raise it over the threshold.
You can take
this crippled breath and paint it fresh and easeful.
I give it back to you. I expect nothing but
freedom, to walk again like a very young child -
absolute, connected.

On Solid Ground

Beyond the chiseled-out hole,
beyond the seed that died on fertile ground
and the inseparable mourning doves,
meaning will be restored, maybe never grasped,
but down deep the turbulent waters will cease
and the chaos that reigns where there should have been love
will only be the surface coat, will be a storm
outside that cannot touch me in my house
or scratch at the scar in my open eyes.
Meaning is here because I choose God, and in doing so,
I am chosen. God will be more than just my rescue,
will be my Kabala spelled out in simple form.
God is now the pin
in this gloomy bubble, the reliever of senselessness,
the groom that dispels any doubt.
God has provided me a horse to sit upon -
here with my companion there is a loyalty between us
that no despair can swallow.
There is a connection that grows, that I know
angels and other heavenly creatures
will rush to defend.

Lament

It is lonely to be loved by God,
stretched beyond capacity by laws
of magnets, hunger and inevitable reality,
to hold open a hand and have even that
security taken, to smile in the face of pressing,
impossible obligations - things owed, things needed,
and the harvest never ready. It is hard to keep
trembling with service and acceptance, to be at ease
and know the gift will come just when it is needed - God will
choose the music, choose which danger is real and what must
depart. It is hard to not cry, sometimes, just because
the world is so big and heavy and laden
with death and arrogant
stupidity. I am free but time is thick
and I get tired of trying to love and
of this loneliness.

Fidelity

Further in
into intimacy, surrendering
the rosary beads, the Buddha beads,
the Krishna beads - necklaces
of superstitious worth, a means to be compensated
with miracles for work done - disciplined activity
performed with the anticipation of divine participation -
enduring boredom with karmic pride. But nothing works
that way or does it let go and become voluminous
just because of accumulation. Why can't I be
the things I see? Why do I resist collapse, clasp
onto linear principles, desperate to be justified.
Intimacy is everything ever sought - to have God inside
filling, overtaking every other sensation. Movement
like locked loins or other body parts in
synchronized ministrations, joining another's pulse,
extending the body's confines. I will not want for more
but this surrender - the stillness of receptivity coalescing
with the arching activity of advancing without
expectations of results, to be delivered
into the rhythm of tangible grace, giving into a relentless
rich flow that knows taste and substance, but no set speed.
I know staying this way is not easy,
not when the bedsheets are moth bitten and money
is stolen at the corner store.
I know teeth need fixing and foundations
are fragmenting, but how can that matter
when the whole is at stake? When whatever is taken,
explored and received is there to guide further in.
When God is asking
for this union to be achieved, offering peace but
no ego reprieve - no other lovers, no compromise.

Edified

Was I bound by the artificial?
Driftwood down an interceding flow?
Horse stance, back muscles rolling, lines of twine,
and fishing. I will not fish or tighten my spinal cord
for the appearance of strength.
I will not bask relaxed in hot spring nobility or lick the nose
of prey I someday plan to devour.
Was I combined or conditioned
to make a unified shape?

Loudly, my name was spoken. It was God, I am
sure of that. And it was angry, pressing, urging me
to wake and take nothing lightly or so hard.
It was the second time
at the time of 2:30 a.m., when my bed flushed with instant
rigidity, lifting me with dominance
from the gardens of my despair.

It was spoken as a permit to build, to trap the past inside
the future - not as vintage romanticism, but for the sake
of journeying onward, to be integrated
with what must be re-owned, absolved by the fact
that nothing can escape the impact of eternity. I was shown
that the igloo mansions I once erected,
featuring such elaborate depictions,
cerebral justifications of indignant loneliness,
were natural and could not be dismantled.

I heard my name spoken, calling me to dart alert
from a shrinking sleep, to walk the hallway, carve
myself an inclusive center, to answer boldly,
unconditionally step
into the dictates of a personal command.

Will you keep me

here, half-maimed,
a bouquet of translucent daisies, a meager waterfall
that is less than a tide between two places,
more like still-birth - burning improper,
scenting the torso of a tree. A tree
I came across and wanted to cross into its sphere, step up
and build a tight fence around us two
so I would have no choice
but to lean on hefty roots, sleep at the bottom, wide as earth.

Will you keep me, stop me
from compromising a cold solution,
from peddling the fruits of my incandescent plateau
with weak convictions?
Or will you turn me wooden just to protect
what is soft, and not, interchangeable?
Will you keep me in this tattered suit,
as my appetite courses through me grey and unmade,
dragging the tentacle midnight at my heels - my reasoning,
foiled; my affectionate-heart, stunted, incapable of replying.

Havoc and purgatory. Beehives
I have broken. Bend me now to move my lips over
a willing recipient. Will you drink me, go on drinking
the sap that steals
from my pores, purging from my flesh in fluctuating doses?

Will you keep using me? My loins are like snow
shadowing white a lush green. These exaltations I need
are like the images sailing tumultuously
through my head, grid-locking a purer understanding.
I need to be kept, to be your brown buckwheat,
tender and eatable.

But there is more straw on my veranda
than there are stones, more I must conquer to gain.
Outside is not liberating. It rides in
on a limping mare and severs me from holistic learning.
The eagles arrive never asking for remuneration,
but they are useless
as they stream through rainclouds.
They never own anything -
not the cliffs they claim, not prey, and not their offspring.

So will you keep me,
now that I am ambushed by your requests,
thoroughly excavated - liver and marrow - no more,
now that I am gone,
and I have given up every potential shore?
Will you play on my step,
keep me from running, from fading headlong
into a banal madness, keep me
from becoming roadkill, dust
in a never-ending duststorm?

Grace mightier than Natural Law

What if eternity was marked in a mirror,
and we lived there like animated ornaments,
reproducing each dot of matter as reflection?
Especially love
drilled into the furrows of fear, or love
withstanding betrayal by latching firmly to devotion?

What if what we perceived as solid is itself artificial
and that true existence is elsewhere, is a multi-layered
holographic construction coating our reality?
As if death was the overture of our lives,
rooted in continuance and
not defeat.

At times I can taste myself slipping
into the tip of a Cathedral ceiling.
Weapons I cannot use become suggestions,
impractical solutions, there to
analyze other highways not meant to cross.
Highways bearing bright moonlight
on their surfaces, like correspondences looked at
but never read.

At times my singing is subdued,
and I discover these highways I am not welcome on,
find myself disassociated from their flat hum, from their
pavement platform and worn-over buckling curves.

Memories are funerals - the hours we spend
traveling their domains.

I spend my time studying trees. Some trees are not beautiful,
but are depressed growths, even in their grandeur.

When flushed with foliage or sparse, these trees
emanate an aura of monotony. Like looking through
dirty glass windows, watching
pointing fingers, listening
to a zoo of indistinct, inescapable sounds,
they have been drained of vitality.

Ballooned and warm, I am transformed
by the pressure to create symbols to improve
an already great equation.

In this way, I hear a toddler cry, and I think
it is impossible to grow up
and not carry as core the experiences
of kindnesses given and kindnesses withheld:
For we all know it is soothing to be tended to,
to have someone wash our hair.

So what then if there is always a camera
taking pictures? Then it must be important
to be frank in spite of showing rough edges
that spark criticism, disappointment, or a full-body
malaise. It must be important not to falsify speech,
to be able to disregard
pleasantries or other forms of stroking public appeal.

What if I closed the door, turned on the fan, turned on
the light, would I learn to swing or be a domino, a causality?

Principals move like wolves commandeering prey
or like a dozen eggs dropped - their effect built on a single
gravitational happenstance.

What if we are marked, already surviving forever -
each exacting
fraction of ourselves duplicated?

God must muse through such thorough descriptions
of our lives, an overseer of our personalized library,
defeating what seems irreversible
with forgiveness, erasing without remnant
the imprint and impact of things wrongly given, taken, or
left to starve.

Structures I pretend to own

Organs flayed

Nightmares understood

God is a scientist, a retina with constricted veins,
dictating an obituary with every birth.

Circular spots; ink-stains, light-stains . . .

there are so many preconceptions I need to let go of.

I must grasp that rationality and chaos both
are immature theories, primitive understandings.

Nothing can be drawn to scale. Inside the void,
it is fizzing, being expelled then absorbed with
a brief division and then a brief collision - beautiful osmosis.

I saw a strawberry swallowed,

progress from being a fruit to being

a taste-bud treasure. I was engulfed in vastness,
cultivating a pattern.

But there is no pattern, though there is geometry, formula,
and muscles functioning by invariable laws.

God loves most things with a sense of humour,
with an unexpected discharge. Energy cannot be
damaged, but it can pulse too quickly,

get caught in a tachycardia loop,

be confined to a fixed pathway like a spasm, repeating,
stagnant in its activity. That is not love.

It leads to heart failure, lacking

arousal, inflammation, surprise. That is a condition where
sludge is formed and purity is suffocated, and all and all

it is not very crisp. The result is not creation,
movement only, not breathing.

I know I am not meant to hear the angels flutter,
but I hear them anyways. Some nights
they enjoy a quick wing-shudder, jettisoning
in and out of phase. On my sloping rooftop,
near my bedroom window,
they say to me: pregnancy demands a gentle cultivation,
a willingness for a foreign inclusion.
They say: do not look for equilibrium because exact balance
would mean obliteration.

Rapture When Walking

Celestial pine and
words like this that stick
to the roof of my mouth -
tight, tense, forceful like flesh
compressed, elongated. These fattened senses, I sense
it is not normal to look at the bodies of
trees and see a mouth, a breast, hips in
permanent thrust, thrusting into to the grey mass
of clouds that are brought frequently
to their bloated threshold then drained in a steady relief.
I know all animals are naked and people
think themselves clothed, but vanity and the undercurrent
of striving are photographs etched on their exposed arms,
necklines. Sometime I might lift my lips,
press them completely into the vines,
step a day onto another's shore, lose my gender
and be drenched.
Sometimes, I feel you like a prying lover, impatient with our
differences, anguished by the things that separate us.
You have no use for me, alone.
You claim victory, destroy my shell
and make us join, make me not so small but swallowing
everything that is you, like smoke inhaled or
perfume on the tongue. You again, and that
is good because you must know how much I need this chaos
exploding, lingering, desperate to find synchronicity,
then arriving - order and beauty, exact. You must know.
You gave me an eyelid. And I am arriving
sweet, silk, surrounded
to this place. My God, I am
home.

Emptied

I am tired God
of the lack, invisible
corroded treasures,
deciphered, enciphered
throughout the day. I need you
final in my palm. There is this cup,
a spoonful of nectar, only. Knowing so
small like a traveler who cannot see
beyond the knick-knack souvenir, only
this spoonful and a house too quiet in the
early mornings, not enough connection - a wave
that never crests, metal made into nothing.
I need to build, soak myself in this feral blizzard
approaching, always just approaching. Why can't I
have flour? Be someone alive, with wings and a face
of pure stone? Why is your love so tenuous, powerful
sometimes, and then, wispy, hardly registering?
I remember a planet I once tread upon - spiked, clustered
grass, almost blue, but in the sunshine, it was not
a colour that had a name. I want that rawness back,
a festival of sights and sensations,
constant like a ringing bell, ringing
out a perpetual harmony. I want to stop struggling
in this cemetery, mourning things I've never had.
If you would tell me where to watch,
what to do with this trampled voice. If
I could receive a waterfall. God, I am getting older, younger
somehow than when I started. You brought me
here, away from sensual flavours and the mountains' pulse.
Put salt on my lips, paint me, now, please
in turquoise.

I heard a poet say

that doing art is a denial of self. I say
it is an inclusion of God into the self.
It is not simply a dialogue nor is it intellectual banter,
but it is being intoxicated with the fullness
of seeing God there with every thought –
in the swimming pool while treading water,
or at the hair dresser, drinking coffee, waiting for a turn.

A pebble is paradox like time travel is, or a meteor
entering the earth like a man enters a woman -
a synergy of the round and the sharp,
splicing, splitting, until more splicing and splitting, until
dependency on oxygen is born.

Speculation, lectures, ceremonies
are deeds to occupy but never to explain.
Hair like a mammoth's - how I long to run
my knuckles through its thickness and ancestry!
I am not intimidated by people with busy days
and many different shoes. Brown
has become my favourite colour, and grey, that too
is magic. I knew this when I was young:
True intensity is subtle, is equal
in its magnitude as it is to its intricacy -
It commands exploration.

When I was young I knew God was with me
at every threshold, standing inside my flesh. Since then,
I have played with death,
held conference with death as a sister.

But even such sibling biology
cannot cull this communion I have discovered,
can't vacuum apart indelible combined-shapes
into quarantined segregation.

I have known death's jolts, have known
its harrowing cripple and crack, and know
it cannot revert humanity back to that interval
before God exhaled, altering the playing field,
resulting in
such a mighty fusion.

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: The Write Room; The Writer's Literary Muse; Bursting Plethora of Rainbow Colors; Whispers...; PoetryMagazine; Misfits Miscellany; Greensilk Journal; Message in a Bottle; Bewildering Stories; Indigo Rising; Sprout; Kalkion; Crack the Spine (magazine and anthology); Wilderness House Literary Review; Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice; Poppy Road Review (magazine and anthology 2013); Jones Av.; CRASH- a litzine; Asian Signature; The Poetry Jar; New Binary Press Anthology; The Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; Whisper; Boston Poetry Magazine; The Syzygy Poetry Journal; Record Magazine; Iron Gall Press; Creative Talents Unleashed; Poetryrepairs; The Seventh Quarry; FishFood Magazine; Eye on Life Magazine; Kritya Poetry Journal; The Tophat Raven; First Offense; ink sweat and tears; Morphfrog; Chicago Record Magazine; Guwahatian; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Junk in July Poetry Zine; Spirit Fire Review; LiteraryYard; Grease Monkey Literary Forum; The Piker Press; Of/with; Medusa's Kitchen; Leaves of Ink; above/ground press; Creek Side Writing Forum; The Muse - An International Journal of Poetry; Viral Cat; Synchronized Chaos; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry; EskimoePie; Setu; Our Poetry Archive, Scars Publication; Contemporary Women's Poetry Anthology; Mount Parable Poetry Forum; Calvary Cross; The Penwood Review; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; Section 8 Magazine; Torrid Literature Journal; The Open Mouse; New Mystics; Winamop; Upender; SpinRock Reader Lit Forum; Eos – The Creative Context; The Writers Indie Poets Indeed; Rose Poetry Forum; Gossamer Poetry Page; Tuck Magazine; AWS Publishing; GloMag; Ginosko Literary Journal; Moongate Motherbird; Indiana Voice Journal; Cavalcade of Stars; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; The Galway Review; Dissident Voice; Whispers...; Dead Snakes; BigCityLit; The Furious Gazelle

About the Author

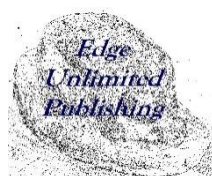


Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” Kyp Harness, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of Wigford Rememberies, Nightwood Editons; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” Taylor Jane Green, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology* and *The Rise of Eros*.

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst," *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

"A river is in Allison Grayhurst's poems. Sometimes it rages over boulders hidden beneath rapids. Sometimes it is as calm and placid as a summer day reflecting skies so blue they are as unusual as a Stellar Jay's wings. The emotions in her poems sear with the power of Sylvia Plath. This is as serious a poet as is writing poetry today. For those adventurous enough to venture into a river wild, deep, calm, beautiful, shadowed, light, filled with moods and emotions of both an inner and the earth's landscape, then this is a journey worth taking. It leads to experiences that have the texture and substance of life," Thomas Davis, poet, educator, playwright, and novelist.

"When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her poems undulate through paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold," Anna Mark, poet and teacher.

